

State House passes legislation to get treatment for mentally ill

By Conor King Devitt, The Oregonian

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The Washington House unanimously passed legislation Friday that would give people with mentally ill family members a greater chance of getting them into involuntary treatment.

House Bill 2725 would allow people to petition to Superior Court if a mental health provider decides not to commit their immediate family member.

"This bill gives families one more option," said Rep. Eileen Cody, D-West Seattle, "one that I believe they need."

Cody is the prime sponsor of the bill, which passed 96-0.

Rep. Jay Rodne, R-Snoqualmie, said the bill could prevent tragedies such as what happened to the family of Joel Reuter last year. Reuter, who had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, was killed by Seattle SWAT members after reportedly shooting through his window at police. Reuter, 28, had not taken his medication for several months.

Rodne said Reuter's parents reached out to mental health professionals in Seattle but could not get him hospitalized because he didn't meet the appropriate criteria.

"Joel's tragic death could have been avoided if he had gotten the intervention in January, six months prior," Rodne said.

The bill, which now goes to the Senate for consideration, was not uncontested on the floor but had opposition at hearings while in committee.

"This bill would impact on the efficiency of a court system that is already overwhelmed," Mike De Felice of the Public Defenders Association said at a public hearing.